UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.: LIMITED
E/ECA/CM.13/56
17 April 1987
Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Eighth Meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
13 - 20 April 1987

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twenty-second Session of the Commission/thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
23 - 27 April 1987

LG/MAIROBI

REPORT OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING (IDEP) ADDIS ABABA, 14-15 APRIL 1987

Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) Addis Ababa, 14-15 April, 1987

1. The Extraordinary meeting of the Governing Council of IDEP was held on 14 April 1987. The meeting which was opened by the Chairman, Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of ECA, was attended by the following members: Messrs. A. Ben Bahri (Tunisia); Jotamy Madubansi (Zambia); Lhoucine Aitel Majhoub (Morocco); Dender W. Mariam (Ethiopia); James O. Otieno (Kenya); Adekunle Olumide (Nigeria) and, Diossy Sanots (Senegal). Mr. Salif N'Diaye UNDP Resident Co-ordinator in Senegal and Essam Montasser Director of IDEP and Secretary of the Council and Mr. Daniel Ghansah, Chief of Administration of IDEP also attended.

2. Also attending were Mr. Paulos Abraham, UNDP Regional Representative and Chief Liaison Office with ECA and OAU. The following staff members of ECA also attended: Mr. M.W. Makramalla, Chief. Socio-Economic Research and Planning Division, Mr. Ali B. Tall, Chief, Technical Assistance Coordination and Operation Office, Mr. Jeggan C. Senghor, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, Mr. M. El-Egaily, Project Officer-IDEP, Mr. K. Camara, SERPD, ECA. A representative of ECA Ms. Martha Schemelzer and a representative of UNDP Ms. Marga Prohl, who were members of the evaluation mission, also attended the meeting.

3. Absent were Messrs. M. Labidi (Algeria); Henry Biengolo (Congo); Edward Bihuhura (Burundi); George Cann (Ghana), J. Robert Eboulia (Gabon) and Denis Traore (Mali).

4. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members and saying that the Extraordinary meeting had been convened to consider the report of the IDEP Evaluation Mission on whose terms of reference the Council agreed at its last meeting and to make the necessary recommendations to the Conference of Ministers through the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole (TEPCOW). After the adoption of the agenda the Chairman apologised for the fact that he had to leave to participate in the deliberations of TEPCOW and said Mr. Lhoucine Aitel Mahjobb would deputize for him.

5. Mr. Mahjoub after thanking the Chairman for the honour bestowed upon him opened the discussions. He said that the Report of the IDEP Evaluation Mission to be discussed is the culmination of a process begun by the Governing Council some time ago as part of the measures to be taken in the search for effective financing of the activities of IDEP.

6. The meeting then decided that because the report was distributed late, and in view of the time at its disposal, it would concentrate on the findings and recommendations of the Mission which it agreed to discuss paragraph by paragraph.

7. Introducing the report, a member of the secretariat summarized the main points of the report. He said that the findings and recommendations of the Evaluation Mission had been reached after an indepth analysis of the Institute's actual capacity and appraisal of its potential to meet the increased need of African countries for competent human resources in the field of economic development and planning. Though the focus of the report was on UNDP assistance over the last five years the missions assessment actually covers all aspects of IDEP and takes into account all factors pertinent to its establishment, development and its future role and orientation.

8. The mission paid particular attention to the respective roles and responsibilities of the main partners concerned with IDEP's past and future development, i.e. the Governments, ECA and the UNDP the main funding source.

9. In terms of the overall purpose of the Institute, the missions findings confirm that IDEP's statute and objectives are as valid to day as they were at its inception. All four assigned activities, training, research, advisory services and seminars/ workshops remain essential. The Institute remains unique in the continent with respect to its orientation curricula, training methodology and outreach. Its development over the last five years has contributed significantly to the consolidation of its basic training, concept and orientation to make it relevant to the actual development issues of the countries of the region.

10. The mission is of the view that the integration of IDEP in the ECA provides a framework which ensures involvement with the policies and programmes of socio-economic development emanating from the African countries and establishes indispensable linkages at the global level. This framework would also ensure IDEP's involvement with those development strategies which deserve priority attention as expressed in the Lagos Plan of Action, APPER and UN-PAAERD.

11. The Mission, however, notes with concern that, despite the increased efforts IDEP has made during the last five years to cope with its requirements, the Institute's resources, human, physical and financial have been shrinking over the same period to the barest minimum. Thus while striving for a balanced development of its four main functions only one - Training - was satisfactorily implemented. With regard to the other three, research, seminars and advisory services, while encouraging results were attained in the area of seminars, institutional research and advisory services were kept in abeyance.

12. The mission highlights the critical situation of the Institute as being characterized by the following symptoms:

- growing deficiency and inadequacy of physical facilities;
- serious under-staffing at the level of teaching and research staff;
- non-existence of specialized staff and for advisory services;
- incommensurate and ill-articulated support and general service staff;
- alarming reduction of IDEP's own financial resource base and subsequently
- increased reliance on extrabudgetary resources comprising primarily of UNDP and to a certain extent other donors;
- Finally certain critical shortcomings in the overall organization and management on the part of all partners concerned.

13. With these in view, the mission advises on the need for a concerted approach by all the partners with a view to sharing responsibilities with regard to the parameters for the Institute's consolidation and future development. The Mission recommends the following as the necessary base on which the Institute's future can be realistically built in a phased approach over the next five years.

- A change in the current use of financial resources with a view to gradually phasing out UNDP's support of core teaching and management staff and funding of the former by IDEP's own regular budget resources;

- Concomitant to the aforementioned reorientation taking over of the funding of the basic management and teaching staff by the governments and subsequent gradual channelling of UNDP's anticipated contribution to IDEP towards increased technical support of well defined operational activities;

- In this context, IDEP's long-standing concern over finding ways and means of responding to requests from governments and international agencies for advisory and consultancy services appear to be the ideal area for meeting with UNDP's interest in building up genuine African expertise in particular as required in the context of its joint programming with ECA regarding the UNDP Fourth Regional Programme for Africa.

14. The Mission further recommends that in order to alleviate the burden to be placed on the African Governments the following measures be taken by the appropriate bodies/organs.

- Reduction of costs currently absorbed by IDEP's regular budget in those areas where savings may not only be feasible but are desirable especially with regard to:

  (a) general service staff costs which the Mission thinks could be streamlined to be comensurate with the Institute's actual needs;

  (b) Interpretation - here the Mission recommends in the short-run the abolition of one post and/or the combination of translation and interpretation as one joint function and not as separate ones performed by completely different sets of staff. Basically however the Institute should start a process aimed at ultimately eliminating interpretation for the basic training programme. Taking into account actual achievements of the introduction of English or French as secondary language in their curricula by African countries interpretation in the language best known by trainees should be elminated;

  (c) Reduction of recurrent cost by combining the annual meetings of the Governing Council to one a year preferably to be held in connexion with the ECA Conference of Ministers.

Other measures recommended are:

- Reactivation of vigorous campaigns to secure the effective payment of governments' assessed annual contributions to IDEP;

- Conversion from secondment into actual transfers (of posts) to IDEP of ECA staff currently working at IDEP;

- Resubmission of ECOSOCs earlier request to the UN General Assembly to fund some UN regular posts for IDEP. In this connection the need to build up IDEP to assist African Governments in the implementation of APPER and UN-PAAERD could be good justificatior to offer;

- Request for secondment and/or transfer of UN regular staff from IDEP's UN sister Institutions in .atin America and Asia;
- Successful implementation of contemplated revenue earning consultancy service to become operational within one year at the latest.

15. The latter steps in particular those involving the UN require decisions and follow-up at the highest levels and would need to be fully supported by the African governments and in particular the active involvement of the host government (Senegal) whose firm and undivided supportive attitude to IDEP has been stressed by the Mission.

16. On the restructuring of the Institute the Mission, after a thorough review of the efforts already made by the Governing Council concluded that it would be impracticable and undesirable to make IDEP independent from the United Nations in the medium-term. On the specific issue of the type of salary scales to be adopted, the Mission concluded that while on the face of it, the adoption of the OAU salary scales appear to be attractive because they seem lower in terms of the levels by identical levels when compared to UN salary figures which include actual allowances". According to the Mission the document studied by the Governing Council on the issue "seems to indicate that a further review of the figures would be required to be able to assess more correctly all the figures. In the absence of more comprehensive comparisons the argument for achieving a higher cost - effectiveness by replacing UN salaries levels by OAU salary levels does not appear convincing."

17. The Mission considers that much more important than the aspect of cost-reductions is in this context the question of either IDEP's independence from the current UN administrative and financial rules and procedures or in other words, its Africanization is a condition for its restructuring. It also underlined the fact that the africanization of the Institute in terms of financial and administrative autonomy should still remain the fundamental objective to be attained in the long-run. This however should be achieved on the basis of the Institute's proven financial and operational self-reliance.

18. In the discussions that followed the summary report, the meeting agreed in general with the findings and recommendations of the Mission but made some comments the highlights of which are the following:

(i) The meeting agreed with the Mission on the need and desirability of reorienting the activities of IDEP to make it respond more effectively to the needs of African Governments particularly in the implementation of APPER and UNPAAERD and their need for expert advise;

ii) In this connection the meeting stessed the need for extra assistance from UNDP in the creation of the capacity which would enable IDEP undertake the appropriate research and establish a consultancy service to assist African governments and earn income therefrom. The aim should be to help the Institute to become a think-tank for African development planning, a centre of excellence for training and research and development of new ideas leading ultimately to a comprehensive African theory of development;

(iii) That UNDP assistance would be still needed furing the fourth cycle but that assistance should be more for operational activities - for example to assist the Institute to establish a viable consultancy service;

(iv) That assistance to core activities (training) be gradually phased out to be funded from governments contributions and income from consultancy services provided by IDEP;

(v) That the Governing Council should meet only once a year. To make it more effective, the meeting however decided that it need not be held in conjunction with the ECA Conference of Ministers as recommended;

(vi) That the involvement of the Governing Council in the recruitment of professional staff other than the Director and other staff of similar level be stopped in order to reduce delays in recruitment. In this connexion the normal UN regulations as stipulated in the statute of IDEP should be followed;

(vii) That the Administrative Instructions of the Institute be reviewed with a view to delegating more authority to the Director of the Institute while still keeping it under the overall supervision and monitoring of ECA;

(viii) That the host Government be approched to take the necessary steps to undertake the repairs which the Institute's building badly needs.

19. The representative of Senegal informed the meeting that his Government cannot however undertake to provide accommodation for the students of IDEP.

20. In spite of Senegal's position, it was advised that the administration of IDEP should take appropriate action in line with the decision taken by the Council at its last meeting.

21. The representative of UNDP gave the views of the UNDP on the recommendations of the mission. The views on the whole accepted the recommendations of the Mission particularly with regard to the future orientation of IDEP which were in line with UNDP's own thinking. The comments contained in the telex from UNDP was read out to the Council. The telex is reproduced below:

a) In general we agree mission findings and recommendations

b) In particular we endorse views that IDEP remains unique in view of its continent-wide outreach towards African economic cooperation and integration

c) We note however that among its four functions namely training, research, conferences and advisory services IDEP concentrated mainly on training. Its research activity is not implemented due to capacity constraints and advisory services almost non-existent

d) We feel that the recommendations in the report are closely in accordance with our own thinking concerning what IDEP should do during the fourth cycle to deserve UNDP's further assistance. We endorse recommendation that IDEP should develop planning capacity in relation to future changes forseen in existing developmental structure as well as comprehensive plan for institutional research in areas relating to UN-LPA, APPER and UN-PAAERD

e) As in case ESAMI IDEP should develop capacity for income earning through advisory and consultancy services in economic development matters with the view becoming in long run self-sufficient

f) While graduate studies leading masters/Ph.D useful we strongly feel that IDEP should not involved in such activities. Rahter it should concentrate on short courses of maximum six months duration focusing on macroeconomic planning and on areas directly related to African economic situation

g) As regards high cost interpretation we agree completely that this should be reduced by combining interpretation and translation and eventually suppress interpretation

h) In line with new orientation for fourth regional programme for Africa we endorse mission recommendation that new UNDP project should reflect relationship between gradual phasing out of current support of core teaching and management staff in favour of increased technical support of operational activities. Otherwise new direction recommended by mission for IDEP would be difficult to implement. Needless to say increased government contribution must be achieved in order to make IDEP viable.

i) In view of the fact that UNDP has supported IDEP for over 20 years we now find it difficult to continue our assistance in present form particularly with existence of new orientation for UNDP fourth cycle regional programme which endorsed by ECA Council of Ministers

j) Finally we wish record our sincere appreication of work well done by consultants and special thanks to ECA and UNDP participants without whose involvement the mission would not have taken place as planned. Kindly these views to the Governing Council deliberations report and depending conclusions reached UNDP reserves right to and intends elaborate further on direction. Scope and content Idea activities proposed for financing under fourth cycle regional programme." unquote.

22. In the discussions on these views the meeting welcomed the UNDP's willingness to continue assistance to IDEP. The meeting thought that in the present circumstances where Government contributions were not adequate, the Institute needed UNDP assistance. The Council however recognized that this assistance could not continue indefinitely and that African Governments have to accept the full responsibility and be ready to face it when UNDP ultimately withdraws from support for IDEP's core activities. The withdrawal however should be a phased one.

23. On the recommendation by the UNDP that the MA course be dropped from IDEP's training programme and that the Institute should concentrate on short-term courses up to a maximum of 6 months duration it was agreed, after explanation by the Director, that the final decision and actual details be left to the Board of Studies to be established. It was suggested that IDEP should concentrate on courses which can be managed within its available resources.

24. On the selection of students for courses it was recommended that the care should be taken to ensure that students always had the basic qualifications in economics, statistics and mathematics. It was however agreed that in special cases some allowances may be made for students from least developed countries who may not have the students with these qualifications but have sufficient experience to be able to follow courses. It was also suggested that instead of making this set of students do the same course as others, special short-term courses may be arranged for these less qualified students.

25. It was also recommended that language should be an important criterion in the selection as a means of overcoming interpretation.

26. One member expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that the Institute could not provide fellowship to students recommended by his Government eventhough his Government pays its contributions regularly. The secretariat explained that this could not be done because the institute had not obtained any fellowships for that course. It was, however, agreed that due account should be taken of the factor of payment to the regular budget of IDEP in allocating fellowships to member States.

27. On the recommendation that countries which have difficulty in paying their contribution in kind by seconding staff to IDEP, it was agreed that the countries resorting to this option should be made to bear all costs.

28. Finally on the restructuring of IDEP the Council decided that it would be desirable now to keep the Institute as a United Nations Institute, particularly in view of the fact that funds derived from Governments cannot support the Institute. However, it was recognized that ultimately the Institute has to become a fully Africanized and self-supporting Institute. This should be a long-term goal for the Institute.

29. The Council decided that the recommendations and decisions reached by its extra ordinary meeting on the future, of IDEP based on the finding and recommendation of the Evaluation Missions be considered by the 22nd Session of the meeting of the ECA conference of Ministers with the request to a resolution calling upon all parties concerned member States UNDP, ECA and IDEP to take appropriate and prompt action to implement the recommendations as soon as possible in order to ensure an orderly and effective management and long-term development of the Institute with the new orientation envisaged in the recommendations.